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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 000697

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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SUBJECT: SNAPSHOT OF KEY NORTHERN GUBERNATORIAL RACES

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Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Similar to the Presidential contest, most Northern gubernatorial elections will be fought between the two major parties in Nigeria, the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Nigerian Peoples' Party (ANPP). The only formidable challenge the Action Congress (AC) presents is in Adamawa State, Vice President Atiku Abubakar's home base and the final battleground in the Obasanjo-Atiku impasse. As most northern Nigerians contend that eight years of Obasanjo rule have only exacerbated the overall economic situation in the North, antipathy towards the PDP will weigh heavily in the minds of voters as they head to the polls on April 14. The PDP's coordinated strategy to co-opt several ANPP governors and its overarching power to control state resources (including INEC, which tallies and announces results) to serve its interests may help secure PDP victories in a region of the country that is avowedly anti-PDP. Where the ANPP could not be bought out (Kano, Borno, and Zamfara) and candidates will look to ride the coattails of Buhari's popularity, the ANPP will likely retain power. In states such as Gombe, Jigawa, and Yobe, where party in-fighting coupled with a disjointed, disunited opposition strengthen the hand of the ruling party, PDP wins are expected. Bauchi remains too close to call. Following is a rundown of key gubernatorial races in the North. END SUMMARY.

ADAMAWA

¶2. (C) While Vice President Atiku Abubakar's hopes for the Presidential seat appear dubious, the AC remains poised to capture the state. Despite Governor Boni Haruna's widespread unpopularity, PDP aspirant Retired Vice Admiral and former Chairman of the Committee on Disbursement in the Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture Murtala 'Maimagoro' Nyako will give the AC candidate, former Secretary to the State Government Ibrahim Bapetel, a tough fight. Many suspect that Governor Haruna is doing Atiku's bidding in Adamawa. Haruna is viewed with disdain by the electorate, owing to the lack of infrastructure and services provided during his tenure in office, complicating AC prospects in the state. At the same time, Adamawa is home to a cadre of influential PDP heavy-weights (for example, Senate Foreign Relations Chair Jibril Aminu) and many other former ANPP elders who have

decamped to the PDP, all of whom will work to secure a win for the ruling party. By all estimates, this will be a close call. In view of the fact that the Obasanjo-Atiku impasse will be played out in force in Adamawa, the stakes are high for both the PDP and AC to capture the state. However, should the PDP achieve an easy victory, this would assuredly precipitate cries of electoral fraud and violence.

BAUCHI

13. (C) The race in Bauchi is a contest between the PDP's Mohammed Nadada Umar and the ANPP's Isa Yuguda, former Minister of Aviation. In advance of the December PDP primaries, six of seven candidates stepped down in protest. The PDP's capacity to manage and avert crisis within the State party structure has aided in its cohesion and strength. Though the ANPP's chances are buttressed by the popularity of Buhari and the lack of confidence most of the electorate vests in Governor Ahmad Adamu Mu'azu, an ANPP win will be surprising given the likelihood that voters do not perceive Yuguda as a strong contender. Both Umar and Yuguda played a role in bringing Mu'azu to power in 1999 and again in 2003. Yuguda, sacked from Obasanjo's cabinet in late 2006, decamped to the ANPP when PDP State elders marginalized Yuguda during the party membership revalidation exercise in November 2006. Violence has erupted several times over the past few months in Bauchi, owing in large part to the presumed ANPP and PDP employment of political thugs known as "sarasuka" (unemployed youth).

BORNO

14. (C) Recent clashes between the ANPP and PDP have raised the political temperature in an otherwise quiet state. Although currently under investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), ANPP gubernatorial

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incumbent Senator Ali Modu Sheriff hopes to ride Buhari's coattails and cash in on what he believes are his administration's successful reforms to the education and health sectors. In contrast to 2003, when the PDP did not court Borno as heavily, the ruling party is looking to cast as wide a net as possible throughout the North, where Buhari and not Yar'Adua is perceived to be more popular. Sources inside the ANPP camp allege that the PDP has tried unsuccessfully to buy out Sheriff, who already enjoys enormous wealth. A former Obasanjo ally and confidante of former Head of State Sani Abacha, Sheriff though popular is also infamous for fomenting violence and for his tight grip on dissent and opposition activities in Borno. PDP chances in Borno are further challenged by in-fighting within its own State party ranks. The PDP candidate, Kashim Ibrahim Imam, ran unsuccessfully for the governorship in 2003.

GOMBE

15. (C) On March 19, State police arrested and detained DPP candidate Abubakar Hadu Hashidu, former ANPP Governor of Gombe State from 1999 to 2003, on incitement to commit arson and conspiracy charges. Hashidu escaped on March 21 when his men forcibly and violently orchestrated his release from a magistrate court, allegedly wounding the magistrate in the process. Unless and until the State's main opposition candidates, Retired Colonel Musa Mohammed (AC), Jamilu Isyaku Gwamna (ANPP), and Hashidu (DPP) can materialize into a formal, unified opposition force the PDP faces no challenge and incumbent Governor Mohammadu Danjuma Goje could be announced the winner again despite his unpopularity.

JIGAWA

16. (C) With Governor Saminu Ibrahim Turaki's decamping to the PDP, most political observers anticipate a relatively facile PDP win. Unlike most other northern states, the political importance of the Jigawa emirates, especially

Hadejia, is exploited historically by all political parties. The Hadejia Emirate, which straddles two senatorial districts, constitutes the largest electorate in the state. Privately, the Emir of Hadejia is backing the PDP candidate former Foreign Minister Sule Lamido, who ran unsuccessfully in 2003. The ANPP's Senator Mohammed Ibrahim is popular but his organization is no match for the PDP machinery. Still, this is one of the states where Buhari polled in excess of eighty percent in 2003, so the race is up in the air.

KADUNA

17. (C) The historic center of Northern politics, Kaduna is also home to many influential businessmen, military personnel, politicians, and civil society actors from throughout the nation. Although the state once boasted a strong ANPP presence, eight years of PDP rule under current Senatorial aspirant Mohammed Makarfi, who was one of the few northern governors to support Obasanjo's attempt at tenure elongation, has made inroads to this strength. Makarfi's efforts at fostering dialogue, brokering trust, and promoting more equitable distribution of resources between the almost evenly split Muslim and Christian communities have garnered him much support and popularity among the Christians. While it remains doubtful that the fractured opposition can coalesce to challenge the PDP state machinery, the Zazzau Emirate will not back him in the contest. Even though the ANPP was expected to select Senator Ahmed Aruwa as the party's gubernatorial candidate, his investigation by the EFCC, squashed his chances thereby potentially also weakening the prospects for a credible ANPP challenge in Kaduna. In the end, this election remains close.

KANO

18. (C) In the latest census figures, Kano was determined to be the most populated state in the nation with an estimated 9.3 million residents, 4.1 million of whom are registered voters. Although the Kano electorate may be fickle and unpredictable, four years of successful rule from ANPP Governor Ibrahim Shekarau and his outspoken opposition to Obasanjo's third-term bid have made him nearly unbeatable on the street. Moreover, though Shekarau once served as the

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Permanent Secretary to the Kano State Government, he boasts limited personal assets and therefore is exceedingly popular - known affectionately by the common man as "Mallam" (teacher). Shekarau also enjoys the unofficial endorsement of the Emir of Kano, who has worked closely with Shekarau to implement Sharia reforms in the state (known as the 'A Daidaita Sahu' initiative). A strong supporter of Buhari, Shekarau recently distanced himself from the General, whose inner circle contends that Shekarau played too close to Obasanjo in the past two years. Shekarau and Buhari have been patching their differences, and together will remain unbeatable in this state. The main opposition, PDP aspirant Ahmed Garba Bichi, is not well known and has failed to amass significant support from other Kano elite.

KATSINA

19. (C) According to the latest census, Katsina with 5.7 million residents is the fourth most populous state in the country. The race in Katsina, the home state of leading presidential aspirants Umaru Yar'Adua (PDP) and Muhammadu Buhari (ANPP), is a fight between these two parties, but given Yar'Adua's unpopularity the PDP will face strong competition. House Foreign Relations Committee Chair and key adviser to Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Dr. Usman Bugaje, is flying the AC flag in the state. Bugaje is one of a handful of gubernatorial candidates nation-wide to have actually developed a thorough policy document, outlining his plan of action should he become governor. Chief amongst his objectives would be the development and protection of the rule of law and the re-orientation of the state towards

principles consistent with the Islamic faith. On March 17, Katsina State Police prevented the launching of the document. This race is complex and the ability to rig will determine the outcome.

KEBBI

¶10. (SBU) Though solidly ANPP from 1999-2006, the recent defection of Governor Mohamadu Adamu Aliero to the PDP and, particularly, his ability to harness the machinery of the state may help the PDP. The PDP did not hold primaries for the governorship in this state. Opposition parties DPP and ANPP have also alleged that the state government has prevented them from holding rallies in key areas of the capital, Birnin Kebbi. Strongly ANPP in 1999 and 2003, it will be difficult for even the machinery of state to change this trend.

SOKOTO

¶11. (C) Sokoto is the seat of the caliphate, which governs the 12 northern emirates, and is considered the spiritual center for Nigeria's 70 million Muslims. Though divested of formal political power by the Nigerian Constitution in 1960, the Sultan of Sokoto's political overtures historically exert limited influence. The current Governor of Sokoto State, Attahiru Bafarawa, is also the Democratic Peoples' Party (DPP) Presidential candidate. Following violent clashes on March 10 between the DPP and PDP, Commissioner for Police Saidu Daya banned all political rallies in the state. The PDP co-optation of the ANPP candidate, Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko, who served as Governor Bafarawa's deputy from 1999 until 2005 when he resigned following impeachment allegations by the State Assembly and the naming of former Minister of Water Resources under Obasanjo, Mukhtari Shagari, as Wamakko's running mate has strengthened considerably the PDP's position in the state. Even so, Governor Bafarawa will like to see the DPP continue its reign in Sokoto, in spite of a strong ANPP presence.

YOBE

¶12. (C) Yobe State, traditionally dominated by the ANPP and a Buhari stronghold, is gripped by in-fighting within the ANPP and thus, is seriously threatened by the candidacy of former head of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) Adamu Waziri Maina, running on the PDP platform. Current ANPP Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim has openly declared that he will not support the candidacy of ANPP candidate Senator Mamman Ali, instead throwing his weight behind Maina.

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Still, the ANPP is likely to carry the day.

ZAMFARA

¶13. (C) Zamfara is the only state in which the current governor is backing the gubernatorial bid of his deputy. Governor Ahmed Sani Yerima is supporting Deputy Governor Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi's candidacy for governor under the ANPP. Carved out of Sokoto State in 1996 and dependent heavily on federal funds, Zamfara is well-known for its 2000 re-introduction of the Sharia Criminal Code, which criminalized and instituted carnal punishments for apostasy, fornication, adultery, and theft. Though dismayed by Governor Yerima's promises that the Sharia Code would improve the lives of ordinary Zamfara residents, instead believing that the Code was used to stymie dissent and conceal corrupt state government practices, given a weak opposition and the strength of the ANPP the electorate will return the ANPP to power.
CAMPBELL